

WASHINGTON, D.C. – At today’s House Subcommittee on Water and Power hearing, Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno) criticized the Department of the Interior’s handling of the drought crisis. Addressing Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, Michael Connor, Costa reiterated that the Department has failed to provide sufficient drought relief to the Valley, and must increase the flow of water and aid to the Valley’s farmers, workers, and communities.

Excerpts from Costa’s remarks (as prepared) are below.

“The San Joaquin Valley is still in a water supply crisis that is devastating our farmers and way of life. Unemployment rates are at record levels, with 44.8% unemployment in Mendota and 39.8% in Delano city. The amount of people out of work is unacceptable, and I am fed up with the Department’s inability to effectively respond to the catastrophic impact the drought and regulatory restrictions are having on our communities.

“Time and again, I have joined with the people in my district to fight for more water. However, the Department has not been an effective partner. It’s now more critical than ever for the Department to cut through the red tape and remove the bureaucracy that is crippling our local economy and way of life. Water is the Valley’s lifeblood. It’s time for the Department to step up and address the water crisis with the sense of urgency it deserves.”

The hearing marked another step in Rep. Costa’s fight to increase the flow of water to the Valley. Since the start of the 111th Congress, Costa has regularly met with Interior officials and everyone involved in California water to call for immediate and long-term solutions to the drought crisis. In addition, Costa continues to work with his colleagues Congressman Cardoza and Senator Feinstein on measures to bring additional water to the Valley.